

This is Friday, September 21, 1973. Today we are going to be talking to Mrs Maude Richards Seybold Black, and her brother, Charles Richards.

Arva Parks Mr. Richards, could you begin by telling us when you were born?

Mr. Richards On July 25, 1887. (Not real clear on tape!!)

Arva Parks Where?

Mr. Richards On the old Wagner Estate.

Arva Parks In what building on the Wagner Estate?

Mr. Richards The building I was born in was burnt down.

Arva Parks Who were your parents?

Mr. Richards Adam C. Richards and Rose Richards.

Arva Parks Was this building near your grandfather's house?

Mr. Richards It was about an eighth of a mile from my grandfather's house.

Arva Parks Now let's ask Mrs. Black if you would tell us when you were born.

Mrs. Black 1879.

Arva Parks Where.

Mrs. Black In Miami, in my grandfather's home.

Arva Parks That is what we know as the Wagner Homestead that the Heritage Trust has just recently acquired?

Mrs. Black Yes.

Arva Parks Let me ask you about the home in which you were born. Would you describe it on the outside? What did it look like on the outside?

Mrs. Black It was just a plain frame house, and there were no trees around it, as far as I can remember. Just open ground.

Arva Parks Did it have a porch on it anywhere?

Mrs. Black It had a little porch in front.

Arva Parks When you went inside...tell us about the inside.

Mrs. Black You went into one big room. Then you went through there, into the next room where there was a dining room, and on the west side was the kitchen.

Arva Parks Was the kitchen like a little separate building?

Mrs. Black I think it was all in one, I'm not sure.

Arva Parks So, there was just the two rooms downstairs?

Mrs. Black Yes, two big rooms downstairs and a kitchen.

Arva Parks Can you tell us about what kind of furniture was in the house. Just describe it.

Mrs. Black Well, the only thing I remember is my grandmother's room, and a four poster bed made of black walnut, and she had a clothes closet made of black walnut. That's all I can remember of the furniture.

Arva Parks Was her room upstairs?

Mrs. Black It was downstairs.

Arva Parks In the main room, then?

Mrs. Black No, it was in the second room, the back room.

Arva Parks. Tell me about the upstairs, the attic like area.

Mrs. Black There was just, I think two or three bedrooms up there, but I'm not sure.

Arva Parks Do you remember what kind of furniture was in the living room...chairs, or tables?

Mrs. Black Just green (?) chairs and a green(?) wooden table, as far as I remember.

Arva Parks Was the furniture hand-made?

Mrs. Black I don't know. I don't remember. I do remember Grandmother. She, when she was through with the dishes and everything, she always went out on the porch with a stick. She smoked a pipe.

Arva Parks. A corn cob pipe?

Mrs. Black I guess so. My mother had a pipe. I don't know what became of it.

Arva Parks

When did your father build a home nearby your Grandfather's house where Mr. Richards was born?

Mrs. Black

I couldn't tell you just when he built it. I know when I was a baby, he moved across to what now is _____ across the river. He had a _____ mill. I was a baby when he moved there. Then he moved back to Grandma's, and I think that's when he built his little house. I'm not sure. Charley was born there, in the little house.

Arva Parks

Was it about the time he was born, do you think?

Mrs. Black

And my brother Henry, and Johnny, myself and Willie, was born in Grandpa's house, the one you got. But I can't remember just when the old house was built. I remember it was in the Fall because I can remember they had a little garden. Father had potatoes and he planted watermelon in the little garden in back of the house where he was born.

Arva Parks

What year was your Grandfather's house built?

Mrs. Black

I don't know. I couldn't tell you that.

Arva Parks Did he ever talk about it being there for a long time?

Mrs. Black It was there for a long time. That was the first house they lived in. You see, he came here as a soldier during the Indian War. He came to Old Fort Dallas when they had the Indian War. He came from Charleston, South Carolina.

Arva Parks The house that still remains, was that his first house that he built?

Mrs. Black Yes.

Arva Parks I had read once that another house had been blown down. Have you ever heard that story, that he had built another house first and it was blown down.

Mr. Richards It had been wrecked by a storm, and re-built.

Arva Parks Did he re-build, or did he build a new house.

Mr. Richards He re-built the old house into a new house.

Arva Parks How far was your grandfather's house from Wagner's Creek?

Mr. Richards I would say about an eighth of a mile.

Arva Parks Did you ever hear why he built it so far away from the water?

Mr. Richards No. Only that he had to do it to get on to higher ground. That it wouldn't overflow.

Arva Parks Was there a dock on Wagner's Creek?

Mr. Richards No, not that I know of.

Arva Parks How far away was the church from the house?

Mr. Richards The church was , oh about only 150 feet or less, from the original house, the house it is now.

Arva Parks What church was that?

Mr. Richards That was the little Catholic Church, the first church in Miami.

Arva Parks The house that we're talking about, your grandfather's house, has been moved, I understand, a little bit. How far was it moved from where it original was? Do you know that?

Mrs. Black The house was never moved as far as I know.

Mr. Richards Yes, it was moved across the street, Maudie. It was moved from the north side of the street to the south.

Arva What other buildings were nearby? There was the church, and your grandfather's house. Was there a barn, or anything like that?

Mrs. Black There was a _____ mill. A starch mill that he had down near the creek.

Arva Was that your grandfather's starch mill?

Mr. Richards Yes.

Arva Describe that. Did it have a thatched roof? or what?

Mr. Richards I can't describe it because you see my father moved from there before I was a year old, and when we went back there in 1900, it had all been gone.

Arva Can you, Mrs. Black, describe the _____ mill, what it looked like?

Mrs. Black Not very good. It was just a big building, and they used to dry the _____ outside. That's all I can remember. It was an open building.

Arva Mr. Richards, you say you moved back there in 1900. That's after you were married, then, is that right?

Mr. Richards Yes, in 1900 we moved back there.

Arva Why did you move back there?

Mr. Richards Because my grandfather wanted to be on his old home

Arva Did you live in the house then?

Mr. Richards No, we lived in another house that had been built by Mrs. Tuttle. He originally sold the old homestead to Mrs. Tuttle, and when she died in bankruptcy, my father got a lawyer and got the property back, because she hadn't paid for it; and she had built a house and a barn on the property. It was a good big barn, with a large hayloft in it and concrete floor in part of it.

Arva Your grandfather's house was still there, though, when you went back.

Mr. Richards Oh yes. It was there.

Arva Was anyone living in it then?

Mr. Richards Not at the time we went back. There had been people living in it, but they had left.

Arva Do you know what year your grandfather had sold the property to Mrs. Tuttle?

Mr. Richards I don't. I don't know the year.

Arva How long did you live there then, on the property. How many years.

Mr. Richards We lived there from 1900 to 1909, when my mother sold it.

Arva When did your grandfather die?

Mr. Richards As near as I can remember, between 1901 and 1902.

Arva Where is he buried?

Mr. Richards He's buried in the City cemetery.

Arva What year did your grandmother die?

Mrs. Black He (Mr. Richards) was one year old....

Mr. Richards I was a year old, so that would have been in 1888.

Arva What was your grandmother's maiden name?

Mr. Richards I don't know.

Arva Name for us all of your brothers and sisters...let's get that down.

Mr. Richards A half-brother, Henry Wagner; John Paul Richards; "Maude" Sara Elizabeth Richards; William Franklin Richards; Laura Elizabeth Richards; Coral Amelia Richards; Charles Adam Richards; Harley James Richards; Anthony Oliver Richards; Arthur James Richards, and Mary Elizabeth Richards.

Arva That's quite a family. How many of you are there still?

Mr. Richards There's only just four of us left - Arthur and myself, and Mrs. Deitrich and Maude Black.

Arva Mrs. Deitrich is Cora?

Mr. Richards Yes.

Arva Mrs. Black, how did you get the name Maude?

Mrs. Black I was named after my aunt.

Arva Was your name really Sara Elizabeth?

Mrs. Black My Christian name was Sara Elizabeth. My father wanted me named Sara Elizabeth, and my grandmother's sister wanted me named after her, which was _____, and I always went by that name because the family always called me Maude -- my grandmother, grandfather, uncles and all. That's all they called me. So, nobody knew my right name, until it came to signing papers. When I was married the first time to Murray Seybold, it was the first time he knew my name was Sara Elizabeth. I was christened Sara Elizabeth, but Maude is my nickname.

Arva Tell me about your uncle ... about the Wagners.

Mrs. Black

Well, he lived with my grandmother and grandfather until they died, and then he lived at Fort _____ after that. He rented a place. Then he went to Charleston, South Carolina, got married there, and then he came back.

Arva

Which uncle is this. What is his name?

Mrs. Black

Uncle William Wagner.

Arva

This is the same William Wagner that lived in Coconut Grove?

Mr. Richards

Yes.

Arva

Does he have children that are still living?

Mrs. Black

He had one daughter when he was in Charleston. Then he came back to Miami, Coconut Grove; then, after he came back to Coconut Grove... let's see, the baby was born in Charleston..his oldest daughter, that was Geneva the oldest girl. That was in Charleston, South Carolina. Then he moved back to Miami. . . . ????. He worked for Commodore Monroe, and he lived in a house he built for them.

Arva

Commodore Monroe built the house for him? to live in?

Mrs. Black

There are some children in Miami, living somewhere, I don't know where.

Arva

They are in Miami.

Mrs. Black

Geneva died here a little over a year ago, and Clara died long before that. But, the rest of the family are all over Miami.

Arva

Are there any Wagners in Miami by that name now?

Mrs. Black

There's one of his sons in Fort Lauderdale. He's married. He's the youngest one.

Arva

What is his name?

Mrs. Black

I couldn't tell you.

Mr. Richards

Joseph Wagner.

Mrs. Black

Joseph was the oldest one.

Mr. Richards

He had six daughters, and then one son.

Arva

It would be nice for all your family to know about this.

Mr. Richards

Of course, his six daughters' names were Geneva, Ruvina, Clara, Elizabeth, and I'm stumped on the other two names. I can't remember them.

Arva

Did your mother have another brother, too?

Mrs. Black

I think she had another one, but I'm not sure.

Mrs. Black

I can't remember. I think his name was _____. I don't know.

Mr. Richards

There were no other brothers that I ever heard my mother speak of. And of course we came here from South Carolina, from Sullivan Island (?), South Carolina, in 1858, to join my grandfather who had come here in 1855 with the soldiers during the uprising. He was sent here with the Charge of the Commissary, for the Government. That was the last of the Seminole Wars. And, the day that my grandmother, mother and uncle arrived here, the Indians hoisted the white flag for peace, at as near as I can tell, somewhere about SW 8th Street and Miami Avenue.

Arva

Mr. Richards was telling us a very interesting story about how his-father got here. Would you like to tell us for the tape recording?

Mr. Richards

well, of course, he was an Ohio-an by birth, As he used to say, a "Buckeye" by birth, Housier(?) by adoption, and a Floridian by damned hard luck. And he came here in 1875, landed at Brickell Point, south of the Miami River. He got here by sailboat. He had immigrated to Venezuela, and when he got there, he found the country all at war, and he walked (he and his partner) seven hundred miles across Venezuela to get to a port where there was an American Consul

to ask to be sent back to the United States, and they were placed on the "Ambassador" that happened to be the old battleship "Kansas" in the harbour at time, and he sent for the commander of the battleship and told him he had two men who wanted to go back to the United States, and there was another man in the Consul Room who jumped up and said "By God, there's three of us!!" And the commander of the ship was told to put them off at the first port they touched in the United States, which happened to be Key West. And he came from Key West here by sailboat, in 1875, no it was 1874, because he ran up onto Brickell Point on January 1, 1875. The "Kansas" was one of the last of the old wooden battleships.

Arva

Tell us more about your father when he was a census taker.

Mr. Richards.

Well he was, as near as I know, not elected. He was appointed. Tax Collector for Dade County, and collected in 1878 the back taxes for 1877 and 1876, and collected taxes for 1878 and 1879. And then he was appointed a Deputy United States Marshall here, and then took the Census here in 1880, when Dade County extended 22 miles above Palm Beach to what they call Juno, and ^{there} was only a total of 97 population in the entire colony, and there were 94 whites and 3 Neg

Arva

Did your father have any trouble collecting taxes? Did anyone object to paying them? Did they make a disturbance or anything?

Mr. Richards

Not for the State and County Taxes, but he had trouble when he was Deputy United States Marshall here. He had trouble collecting revenue tax from the Brickells. And had finally to _____ to make them pay.

Arva

Can you tell us about some of the visitors that would come to your grandfather's house?

Mrs. Black

The Brickells;all those people used to visit us.

Arva

Who were your closest neighbors near the Wagner Estate.

Mrs. Black

Mike Oxa (????) who lived across the street.

Arva

When you went to Brickell Point, did you go by water or by land?

Mrs. Black

We went down the River in a canoe. Dad had an Indian canoe.

Arva

What did you do for amusement when you were a girl? What did you like to do?

Mrs. Black

We used to play by ourselves for we had no neighbors, just us children. We played together. That's all.

Arva

Did you have any books to read.

Mrs. Black

No, no books to read.

Arva

Did you have any pet animals?

Mrs. Black

We had dogs, and we had some cats. That's all.

Arva

Tell me about how you went to the Everglades from the Wagner House.

Mrs. Black

We went by River.

Arva

Didn't a lot of people come up there and stop on their way to the Everglades.

Mrs. Black

Indians is all I know.

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Mr. Richards

A nine-hole golf course, and they had built a new bridge across it, but it was part of the old _____ at that time.

Question

What kind of mischief did you get into when you were young. What did you do?

Mr. Richards

Everything. We got into everything. We did things any kids would do I guess. And, as far as I can remember, we, I remember that we would always ..the only games we could play was marbles, and we always had the nice colored marbles.

Question

Did you go hunting? Did you go fishing?

Mr. Richards

Well, yes, we used to go fishing, boating.

Question

What did you catch in those days.

Mr. Richards

Well, we used to fish for snapper more than anything in the mouths of the small streams.

Arva

Did you swim in Wagner Creek?

Mr. Richards

No.

Arva

Mrs. Black, did you swim in Wagner Creek?

Mrs. Black

No. Maybe others did. I didn't.

Arva

People didn't swim much in those days for amusement, did they? For the fun of it.

Mr. Richards

No, it wasn't much of an amusement. We used to -- I have been swimming down here just south of Tathaiti Beach. I've been there quite often, a bunch of us boys would slip off and go in and take a swim there and be in the water. But, I could never swim. All I could do was wade around.

Arva

What are your feelings about having this house, that your grandfather's house is going to be saved.

Mrs. Black

I think it's wonderful.

Arva

So do we.

Mrs. Black

It's mighty nice you can save it. I never thought it would be saved. It's too bad so many of the old places are being torn down.

Arva

It's amazing that house has survived this long. Did you ever know the Cassells that lived there for so long?

Mrs. Black

I didn't know them/

Arva

They lived there from 1909 until 1971.

Mrs. Black

No, I never knew them.

Arva

Tell me, when you were a girl, how did you mother manage about the laundry and everything. Did you have to wash everything by hand?

Mrs. Black

Yes.

Arva

Did you have a well, or did you get water from the Creek?

Mrs. Black

We had a well.

Arva

And, then you had to boil the water on a wood stove, probably.

Mrs. Black

Yes, she used to boil our water on the stove, as far as I remember.

Arva

Did she make her own lye soap, or buy soap from Brickell.

Mrs. Black

No, she bought soap. She used to ship starch to Key West, then they got groceries in Key West, for Brickell's prices were very high. You could buy things in Key West cheaper. So most of the groceries came from Key West.

Arva

Evidently Brickell liked the dollar!

Arva

Tell us about the only time you got a spanking.

Mrs. Black

That's when I ran away from home. I went down to grandmother's when I shouldn't have gone. Dad told me never to go down there because there were panthers. That night I went down, and he came after me, and where I had walked, a panther had stepped in my footsteps. And, he took me home and gave me a good spanking. And I never went down again.

Arva

Where were you living then. How far were you from your grandmother's.

Mrs. Black

Just a little ways. But this panther had walked in my footsteps, and Dad paddled me with a shingle. That's the only time I ever got a paddling.'

Arva

Did you have any other experiences with wild animals.

Mrs. Black

Well, after that the only other wild animal I saw was when he was a baby.

My grandmother was sick, and we were ther. I had taken him (Mr. Richards) and my sister Laura and Cora, and we walked down to the Creek. And on the way back a big panther came up .on a big knoll in front of us, and I just stood still, with him in one arm, and Coral and Laura hanging on to my dress. We just stood still. My uncle was sitting on the porch and he saw the panther, and as he came out, the panther walked away..

Arva

Did you ever hear of panther attacking people.

Mrs. Black

No.

How about your brother? Did he ever get a spanking?

Mrs. Black

My brother, Willie, was out there poking around the hammock, and the old panther came after him. But she had babies with her, and she started to come after him. He had a shotgun, and he shot her and killed her. And my father had the little ones. He took them home. And they both died.

Arva

Well, we certainly thank you for all this. I know you're probably getting tired of all these questions....

Mr. Richards

...we hadn't been for years. And it pleases me very much to see that they can, and I remember the Monroes -- Kirk Monroe, Raoul Monroe(?), the Peacocks, the _____, Frows, and of course it would come to me at times the different other names of people that lived in Coconut Grove. And when Maude speaks about her panther, I could describe very much where that panther was, and what was the cause of it. Her brother and one of his chums were out hunting for coons, and they went to this one place, and the high Palmettos, and the dog that they had with them came back out crying, so my brother stooped down to see what was the reason the dog was crying and there was a panther ready to jump on him, and it had little ones - it had babies, and the picture of my father with that panther in his arms - that was when he was at the old Peacock - he was working at the old Peacock Inn Hotel in Coconut Grove.

Arva

Did you live in Carl Ewling's house in the Grove?

Mr. Richards

Yes, we lived at the Ewling Estate there in a house ...it was this side of Coconut Grove.

Question:

Was that the same house that Julia Tuttle Built?

Arva

This is the Grove, this is where Camp _____ used to be.

???

I was going to say that in Nixen Smiley's new book, there was a house there that Ewing had owned, and later Julia Tuttle.

Mr. Richards

Later the -- hm-m-m -- if I can get their minds....

Arva

Dr. Simmonds?

Mr. Richards

No-o-o, if I can get it through my mind --- Dr. Simmonds Mrs. - she was a doctor, and they had , he built a factory there to make guava jelly, and we sold them guavas to make guava jelly there at the old Ewington place.

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